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Interview with Roy R. Rubottom Jr.

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR ROY R. RUBOTTOM, JR.

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is Feb 13, 1990. This is an interview with Ambassador Roy Rubottom on the behalf of Diplomatic Studies. I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. Mr. Ambassador, I might add parenthetically, in this interview that this is a fortuitous meeting because Ambassador Rubottom is up here from Texas and so we are getting together. I will ask some questions. Mr. Ambassador, could you give me some idea of where you came from before you got involved in foreign affairs?

RUBOTTOM: I was born in Brownwood, Texas. I went off to Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, when I was sixteen years old, graduated four years later when I was twenty, and earned a fellowship in the Arnold School of Government at SMU.

Q: When did you graduate?

RUBOTTOM: I graduated in 1932. I took a Masters Degree in the class of 1933.

Q: That was an era when very few were going on to get a Masters.

RUBOTTOM: That's right. I was interested in the Foreign Service, I think unconsciously, because my favorite courses in grade school and high schools were related to Geography.

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I read all the history books there were in the Brownwood, Texas, Carnegie Library by the time I was through with the ninth grade. My interest was also in the study of Spanish. I had three years of Spanish in High School and then I had three years of Spanish at SMU as an undergraduate. My graduation coincided with the drought in recruitment. No one was recruited for a period of three or four years.

Q: In the Foreign Service?

RUBOTTOM: Yes, in the Foreign Service. Even though I was interested in it, I had to make a living doing something else. I had been working ever since I was twelve years old. I worked my way through the University. I was traveling secretary for my college fraternity for a couple of years. Then, the Dean of Students, who was a very distinguished man at the University of Texas, offered me a job as an Assistant Dean when appropriations allowed for it. So in 1937, four years after I graduated, I became the Assistant Dean of Student Life at the University of Texas. After the first semester, I immediately began pursuing the Doctorate in Latin America Area Studies with the intention of majoring in Government. I took courses under two very distinguished people there, an historian, Charles Wilson Hackett, and a Government Professor named J. Lloyd Meacham. I accumulated about forty or fifty hours of graduate work when, in 1941, after being there four years, World War II started. I got very intellectually and emotionally involved and applied for and got a naval commission in the Office of Naval Intelligence. As soon as I got a commission, in May or June of 1941, I was called to active duty. It was about six months before Pearl Harbor. Then after about a year, the Navy sent me to Latin America because of my experience. I served two years as Naval Liaison Officer in Mexico on independent assignment in uniform.

Q: Could I ask what you were doing because I've never heard of any body involved in this kind of work? I think it would be very interesting.

RUBOTTOM: At this time in 1943, the United States Navy was getting ready for the big push in the Pacific and there were hundreds of small craft, SCs PCs, and minesweepers that had to make the trip through the Panama Canal after being built on the East Coast. They were usually crewed by young reserve officers such as myself, usually much younger because by this time I was over thirty years old. They would come up the Pacific Coast to Manzanillo, which was half way to San Diego and Long Beach. They would stop there to refuel and to resupply with food and fresh water. I had two yeomen working with me, enlisted men, and my job was to keep contact with PEMEX, the Mexican Oil Company, to be sure there was always enough fuel, to keep the water supply available which was a real problem because the water had to come from a long way off, and every now and then we would have storms or whatever, which resulted in breaks in the water supply. And, of course, the food supply. Well, I was there two years and then I was sent to Asuncion, Paraguay as Naval Attach# in the Embassy. I got there about a month or two before World War II ended. Then, immediately, with the Ambassadors support, I tried to close down the Naval Attach#'s office which I imagined they didn't need. It took me almost a year to do that. I finally got home in the summer of 1946 after five years of active duty. Meantime, the Ambassador had interested me in the Foreign Service.

Q: Which Ambassador?

RUBOTTOM: Willard Beaulac.

Q: Oh yes, one of the grand names in the Latin American roster.

RUBOTTOM: Willard Beaulac encouraged me to apply for the Foreign Service under the War Manpower Act, which I did, and I was in one of the very first classes that eventually went into the Foreign Service. We had to take an oral exam, and I came up from Texas for that exam. There were five people in that Examining Board, and I never will forget the Minister who chaired it. He served as Minister to Nicaragua, and he was the one who tested me in Spanish. We got along pretty well, and he advised me at the end of the day

that I had passed and finally gotten into the Foreign Service career at age thirty-five. It had taken me that long to make it.

Q: This is 1947?

RUBOTTOM: I frequently tell young people that if you are interested in the Foreign Service, or anything else, and you work at it and you keep yourself prepared, who knows, not necessarily a war will come along, but something may happen that will enable you to achieve your aspirations.

Q: Did you come in because of your experience at a higher level than the normal level?

RUBOTTOM: Yes, I came in as a class four officer. At that time they had six classes, and I came in as a class four officer. I was assigned to Bogota, Colombia as Second Sec. of the Embassy and stayed there over two years, returning to Washington forty years ago this past month in 1950. Next, I was assigned right out of the blue as Director of Mexican Affairs.

Q: I would like to go back, and then we'll start moving into more detail. When you went to Bogota, what was the situation in Colombia in 1947-49 period?

RUBOTTOM: Well, if you were to speak to the average Colombian, he or she would probably tell you “la violencia” had already begun about that time. One evidence of it was that in my work I had liaison with American missionaries, and they had so many problems —those who wouldn't leave. I had so many problems on their behalf with the Colombian Government, depending on their location, that I became known as the “ecclesiastical attach#.” Seriously, the violence did not really start until after the famous “Bogotazo,” which is an ugly pejorative ending in any spanish word. “Azo” means it means, ugly, bad. Gait#n, the politician and candidate for the Presidency a year or two before that, was assassinated on the streets on April 9, 1948, nine days after the opening of the Ninth Inter-

American Conference. And all the foreign ministers were there along with the Secretary of State, George Marshall. It was an extraordinary time to be there.

Q: You were there?

RUBOTTOM: I had been there about seven or eight months and the Ambassador had assigned me the junior work to get ready for the conference. He had, of course, done the senior work on major policy issues. But I had very good friends at the Foreign Ministry who had been very helpful. We had a delegation of forty to fifty people, and lo and behold, when the list came out, I found myself as the bottom man on the totem pole as the Technical Secretary of the U. S. delegation. Of course, I was following the conference from day to day, hour by hour. I sat right behind Sec. Marshall when he made his principal speech. Everybody was expecting, or I should say hoping—I should say everybody among the Latin Americans—that he would announce a Marshall Plan for Latin America like he had done for the European war-devastated countries at Harvard the June before. Well he did not do that. He announced an extra five hundred million dollar loan capacity for the Export-Import Bank. You could see people literally going down like a pricked balloon when he made that speech. Many times I have wondered, and wished that he might have said, “We're going to have a Marshall Plan for Latin America—it's going to be five hundred million loan capacity,” because in those days that was a lot of money. We could have gotten all the PR advantage of that and we could have put it into the Export-Import Bank for administrative purposes, management purposes, but he chose not to do that. It was the first experience that I had of seeing the United States, if you please, not living up to the aspirations of Latin America. This happened many times before and many times since.

Q: Why do you think, is it that Latin America doesn't rate high—that the American interests just aren't that important there—or is this just an attitude?

RUBOTTOM: Well, I think you have to look at the setting and realize that no Latin American country suffered an armed attack. There was nothing approaching the situation

that Europe was in, and indeed you had in the case of Argentina in particular, and to a lesser degree in Uruguay, Paraguay, and Chile—you had countries with open sympathizers for the Axis cause. Argentina was quite notorious as a matter of fact and they had to be forced, in 1945, literally forced to declare war on the Axis powers. The Soviets insisted on it. It made it easy for us—we might have insisted too. “You can't get entry to the UN, Argentina, unless you declare war on the Axis.” So here you had a country that had been sympathetic to the Axis cause and finally at the tail end of the war had to declare war on the Axis. I think also that Latin America was very much in the economic hegemony of the United States. The advocates of doing business through the private sector, rather than through Government assistance was certainly strong. Opponents of a “Marshall Plan” for Latin America had the strongest positions in the economic bureau in the State Department, and certainly in the Treasury Department. I'm not sure that Latin America deserved a Marshall Plan, but I'm wondering whether for the same money, for PR purposes, we might have called it that.

Q: How did our delegation behave? I'm not talking about corridor behavior, but there was a large delegation that came. This was the beginning of the Organization of American States. Was there much interchange with the other countries or understanding, or not? What were your observations at that time?

RUBOTTOM: Oh yes. We had extremely well qualified people. Besides Secretary Marshall and Commerce Secretary Harriman, who was there and lived in the house with Marshall. They didn't have any hotels adequate to accommodate the twenty foreign ministers who were there so the Colombian Government made arrangements with twenty families who had lovely residences to turn the residences over to be the homes of these visiting foreign ministers. Interestingly enough, Secretary Marshall was in the home of a family who made its money brewing beer, the best beer in Colombia. They were a well known family whom I knew socially a little bit—not as well as I knew some other Colombians. When you got below him [Harriman] then you had Norman Armour. Norman Armour was a tremendous presence in Latin America. He had been Ambassador to Argentina and he was the top

man back in Washington at the time. You had Bill Pauley, who was a non-career type, who was I guess at that time Ambassador to Brazil, no, I believe he was in Peru. You had Ambassador John Dreier, you had Cecil Lyon, you had William Sanders, who later became our Ambassador to the Organization of American States, and Ambassador Beaulac himself. These men were not only able to speak Spanish but were experienced in this area. Then you had junior people, including myself, who were able to do the leg work and keep in touch with the junior members of the other delegations. So, I would say that the rapport between the American delegation and the Latin American delegations was good. This was borne out after the terrible occurrence on April 9th, following which the city in the downtown part was pillaged, looted, several major public buildings were set afire. An estimated 1500-2000 people were killed. Virtually all of them were civilians, men, women and children. It was a terrible, terrible several days. All of downtown Bogota became a “no man's land” for about a week. At the Conference, and I'm getting to the point, the Cuban delegation, and I believe the Argentine delegation, immediately wanted to cancel or postpone the Conference—call it quits and get out. General Marshall was determined to stay. He got enough support from the Brazilians and the Mexicans and a few others who wanted to stay that they took what you might call an ex-officio decision. How we got to that, was extraordinarily interesting. The assassination occurred about 1:00 or 1:30 on the afternoon of April 9th. I was at home eating lunch. I immediately went over to the Embassy residence, Sec. Marshall was coming to dinner at my house that night, believe it or not. Here I was Second Secretary at the embassy. I got word through his assistant that he would like to see how a typical Foreign Service family lived, and so we invited him to come to dinner. The Foreign Minister of Colombia was coming along with Ambassador Beaulac and two or three others. We could seat fourteen at our table. Of course, after the assassination the dinner had to be canceled. I called the Ambassador when I got word about the incident downtown and we got in his car and went to town, but could not get to the Embassy, that is, the Chancery. We had to go back and get in the car. We saw people coming up two streets towards us waving machetes and it was rather frightening. So we got into the car and drove over to an apartment where a number of delegates were

living. Strangely enough, in spite of the fact that the Communists took control over all the radio stations at that time, they never cut the telephone lines. So, we were able to communicate with the people in another downtown office which was right across from the Chancery. Norman Armour happened to be with those people. They escaped during the night, but I don't want to go into too much detail about how they got out, and the dangers involved. Beaulac and I eventually walked from the apartment house where we were to the house where General Marshall was. We slept about two or three hours that night. About 6:30 or 7:00 in the morning, Beaulac recommended, and the Secretary accepted, to have sort of a rump meeting. We invited the Mexicans to come also, because Marshall decided the Conference should continue. The problem was that the Columbian Government was practically out of business. The President's home and office were being besieged and there was a lot of pressure on him to resign. He refused to resign. The President of Colombia was Ospina. So at this little rump meeting of Secretary Marshall, Secretary Harriman, Ambassador Beaulac, and Ambassador Quintanilla, who was a left-wing Mexican type who was their Ambassador to the OAS, not their Ambassador to the United States, but to the OAS. He was there with a Secretary of the Embassy named Peon Del Valle, what a marvelous name—peasant of the valley, and I was there as the junior Secretary of our delegation. Marshall decided that we ought to try to encourage the calling of a rump session of the conference at the home of the Honduran Vice President of the Conference. The President, of course, was the Colombian Foreign Minister. One of the smaller countries was always the Vice President. This was the Honduran Foreign Minister. So we divided up the list to call people to come to the meeting that afternoon at three o'clock. The Mexicans, who didn't know Bogota, took the people who were out in the residential part, and I took the ones who were closer to town. We started out in a jeep to notify these people to come to the meeting. Several jeeps had been flown in that night from Panama and quite a number of people, including some who had been injured, including my Secretary, had been flown to the hospital in Panama. All within the space of sixteen or eighteen hours. As I was about to drive off in the jeep, Secretary Marshall came down the front steps of this residence and he said, “Mr. Rubottom, do you have an arm?”

And I looked at my arms and I said “No, I don't have an arm” and he said “Well, wait a minute.” He sent Pat Carter who was a Brigadier General and who was his assistant (later, Deputy Director of the CIA,) upstairs. He came down and handed him a Colt Automatic 45. The Secretary handed me this and said you better take this. I've still got it. I got my half notified and Peon Del Valle got his half notified. The meeting took place, literally, in the garage behind the Honduran residence. Fortunately there was enough room to set up a kind of a round table and chairs, almost like a get acquainted session at a church function, and these foreign ministers sat in these chairs and after some discussion the vote was taken and it was about 18 to two to continue. After I had notified the people to come to the meeting, on the authority of the Secretary, I went to the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee of the Colombian Senate whom I knew. I must have gotten there about 12:00 or 1:00 o'clock and I said, “On behalf of the Secretary I would like to inform you that we have decided to continue the conference. We realize that you may not be able to come, but we want to show you the courtesy of letting you know that we are going to do it and we do not intend to be run out of the city.” He appreciated that. So the Conference site was moved out to a school, in the residential section, and the Conference continued for about twenty days. Secretary Marshall didn't stay more than another two or three days, but the Charter of the OAS was put together under those conditions.

Q: I wonder, looking at it from today's perspective, the fact that a man who had as much on his plate as General Marshall did at the time the world was in sort of chaos, you almost have to drag a Secretary of State kicking and screaming for a very short meeting dealing with Latin America. And the fact that he was willing to devote that much time is really remarkable considering the amount of time other Secretaries of State have spent. Why did he want to do it?

RUBOTTOM: He wanted to keep the meeting going. I think he truly believed that it was important, and furthermore, in the aftermath of World War II, the Rio Treaty had been negotiated about six months before in the summer or fall of 1947. Actually the Rio Treaty antedated NATO a few months. This is where the principle was enunciated of “an attack

on one is an attack on all." Mutual security was sort of imbedded in rock in those two treaties. Marshall, being a military man and knowing what had happened in the Gulf of Mexico in the early days of the War and knowing how important the South Atlantic had become, wanted a security pact with the Latin Governments. I think he felt that we needed to give it priority. He was a wonderful man. He was a remarkable man.

Q: What caused the assassination? What was behind the assassination? What were the political dynamics of the whole —the Bogotazo— ?

RUBOTTOM: Gait#n practiced law as a criminal lawyer. No one was ever able to pin down the real motive for his assassination. It is generally believed that some person, member of a family or otherwise, might have felt ill-treated by Gait#n. If you know the depth of feelings between the Conservative and Liberal parties in Colombia, it is not so surprising that the event occurred. Gait#n was a prominent Liberal. A few years later, Laureano Gomez became President, then was forced out by coup d'etat. Gomez was a Conservative. Colombians are capable of very very extreme political action. One of the leading politicians had been assassinated on the steps of the Capital about two generations before that. Members of the family of the man who was killed named Samper, were good friends of mine and told me about it. So, its not so unusual, in the context of Latin American politics that this would have happened. The Colombians invited Scotland Yard to come over and investigate to find out to what extent there might have been a conspiracy, perhaps Communist conspiracy, behind it. They were never able to prove that was the case, although once the assassination happened, the Communists moved very quickly into the breach to take advantage of the chaos.

Q: You're talking about the Communists?

RUBOTTOM: Yes the Communists.

Q: So this was not either a pro or anti Communist action. It was the Communist moving in to create a situation more than anything else?

RUBOTTOM: Beaulac wrote about these events in his book, Career Ambassador, and it was published only a year or two after this happened, in 1949 or 50. I believe in that book he does not ascribe responsibility to the Communists, although they certainly did take advantage of the opening that they had.

Q: You were saying that the violencia started from that period on?

RUBOTTOM: It lasted another decade. It didn't really cease until 1958. The Colombians put together something called “paridad,” or parity, in which they made a deal where the two parties reciprocally exchanged the Presidency. Four years for one party, four years for the next for a sixteen year period. This happened. They automatically in this paridad formula divided the Congress in half, divided all the Governorships in half, divided all the Mayor's positions in half, so that you had half Conservative and half Liberal. Those parties are spelled with a capital C and capital L in that country.

Q: You were a political reporter. Was this your main responsibility?

RUBOTTOM: Yes.

Q: What were our interests in Columbia at the time—the 47-49 period?

RUBOTTOM: Well, Colombia had quite a bit of importance in World War II because of its Caribbean coastline. It's principal airline had been founded by Germans. It was one of oldest airlines in Latin America. So from a strategic standpoint by virtue of its location, by virtue of German knowledge of the country, it took on certain importance. It was a supplier of petroleum, the Barco concession, which was a belt of oil production up in north-central Colombia producing oil that was important; a major coffee producer, of course, and a fairly major banana producer, and it had some other economic significance. It had been one of

the leading countries in Latin America. It was for me a magnificent experience to go there and get to know the country. But mind you that was my first diplomatic assignment, if you don't count my experience as a naval attach#. That was a diplomatic assignment down in Paraguay. But this incident, being there at the time, overshadows everything else. I think Colombia was of interest then. The very farsighted, courageous “paridad” formula that I described a moment ago that gave them sixteen years of peace and enabled them to put down the violence, was certainly to their credit. Right now, if you can separate Colombia from the drug scene, it is one of the two or three economically soundest countries in Latin America, along with Chile. It has very little foreign debt, and it is a country with good resources, well-balanced resources, with manufacturing and some exports as well as the commodities, the raw materials, on which so many Latin American countries are almost exclusively dependent. It's a very well balanced country. I have a certain emotional tie to Colombia and Colombian friends with whom I still maintain contact. In fact I know President Barco. I was in Colombia about four or five years ago, two or three times and the last time we were there, my wife and I had dinner with Mr. Barco and his wife who is an American whom we met many years ago. Mr. Barco is a magnificently prepared man for the Presidency. He is a graduate of MIT, served on the Board of Visitors of MIT, and had been Ambassador to the United States. He's had tremendous experience and its just a tragedy to think of the drug scene having come along to totally disrupt one of the best balanced nations in the hemisphere.

Q: Did you feel at the time that there was undue American business influence? I'm thinking of the banana Republic type thing and the various accusations that American business had so penetrated and that it was not for the good of things. Looking at it at that time.

RUBOTTOM: The Banana Republic nomenclature has been used disparagingly for many years, decades, and I guess it is applied principally to the Central American Republics. I don't think that in the eyes or language of any knowledgeable person that Colombia would have been put in that category. It's interesting that you would have mentioned bananas in this context because I had an experience going back there in 1977, 30 years after my

earlier assignment—I took early retirement from the Foreign Service in 1964—and had another career in higher education. I was Vice President of my Alma Mater for seven years, then I was President of the University of the Americas in Puebla, Mexico, and then I taught Political Science for ten years at Southern Methodist University. In 1977, while I was a Professor, I was a Fulbright Scholar and lecturer to Colombia, and I lectured at three Universities there one summer for about four months. Ambassador Peter Vaky, a highly respected Ambassador and former Assistant Secretary also, and a very close friend of mine, was also the Ambassador. Maybe he was the Ambassador a little earlier. I don't want to get that time wrong. I had come back from a trip in 1975. That's when I saw Vaky. Vaky told me the situation of the United Fruit Company. Which has been pilloried and excoriated, of course, as being a company that helped create the “Banana Republics” by taking advantage of them, although later I think they changed their behavior. In the late 60's or early 70's, United Fruit wanted to pull out of Santa Marta, Colombia, which is the principle banana producing area up on the Guajira Peninsula in northern Colombia, right across from Lake Maracaibo, Venezuela. The labor unions were so upset when they got ready to pull out that they begged them to stay and I think they managed to postpone their departure for a few years, which is a little bit contrary to the mythology about United Fruit.

Q: You left Bogota in 1949 and then you came back to Washington where you were first dealing with Mexican Affairs and then Middle American Affairs. First, before I get to that, Ambassador Beaulac is a well-known figure. Could you describe his style of operation? You saw him in two posts. How did he operate?

RUBOTTOM: Beaulac was an extremely well prepared man. Ambassador Beaulac was extraordinarily, I said extremely, extraordinarily well prepared to be an Ambassador. He started out as a very young Vice Consul I think in Tampico or somewhere in Mexico. He acquired a vast experience and was in Spain in World War II—an exciting opportunity for him. We've talked about it many times because I later served in Spain. He spoke the language well. And I would say he was the arch type of career man who had earned his recognition by good education, hard work, and attention to duty. He was not from

an elite background, although he had an excellent education. He was a graduate of Brown University. He was not a man of great financial means. He got his promotions and opportunities certainly on merit. He was a hard task master. He did not deal with knaves and fools lightly, but he was patient with those who had to learn, as he certainly was with me on more than one occasion. He was outgoing and friendly on a personal basis. Our wives became very close friends in the Embassy in Asuncion when I was Naval Attach#. Of course, when I was Naval Attach# I was considerably higher in the hierarchy than I was later when I was Second Secretary. But he took an interest in me and my background and my interest in the Foreign Service, encouraged me to apply, tried to teach me, I think, or guide me at least in the ways that would be helpful and beneficial to me over the long run. The fact that he held five Ambassadorial posts in Latin America, I think, is the best indication of how well he was regarded. It fell to my lot, ironically, to succeed him as Ambassador to Argentina after I had been Assistant Secretary for four years. I sometimes regret it. He came home to the War College and had three or four fine years. I don't feel that I in any way interrupted or interfered with his career. But I'm not sure how he felt at the time. There's actually about twelve or thirteen years difference in our age. Incidentally, today is my birthday. I am 78 years old today. I think Beaulac must be 91. I think he was born in 1899.

Q: Well, my felicitations.

RUBOTTOM: Well, thank you.

Q: What was your job when you went back to Washington? This is in 1949.

RUBOTTOM: I was assigned first to be Consul in Monterrey, Mexico and I came in for the usual debriefing after home leave. I was called into the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary and I was told that they were recommending that my orders be changed and that I was going to be Director of Mexican Affairs. I said, “I appreciate the recognition but I've never even served in the Embassy in Mexico.” “Yes,” they said, “But you lived in

Manzanillo for two years as Naval Liaison Officer and we think that might be even better experience than living in the Embassy in Mexico City." So I said, I will be very pleased to take the assignment. In many many ways I guess it was the most fortuitous assignment that anybody could have had, certainly that I could have had at that juncture in my career. Because I had not gotten very good fitness reports while I was in Bogota. I was absorbing the Foreign Service way of doing things but my fitness reports had me way down in the lowest part of my class. By the time I got to Washington, in January of 1950, I had learned enough about the ways and mores, so to speak, of the Foreign Service that I could handle myself. I knew the lingo, so to speak. Then, I think the fact that I had done so many other things; that I'd been in the Navy, that I'd been in higher education, that I'd been a banker for awhile, all those things came to the forefront and I was able to carve out a useful place for myself in the Washington scene. I could write. I could write short, directly to the point letters. On the Mexican desk like so many desks, but particularly on the Mexican desk, you spend an awful lot of time either writing or supervising those who do write answers to hundreds of letters that go to the Congress. Senators and Congressmen. They send over the letters they receive, asking you to draft a reply. You draft a reply which goes back to them which they can use or not use depending on how they feel.

Q: What type of letters mainly would these be?

RUBOTTOM: Everything in the world—having to do with immigration, having to do with problems with shrimp fishing boats out of Brownsville and Corpus Christi, having to do with the fact that somebody's relative had an oil interest that was nationalized in 1938 during the Cardenas regime, having to do with bridges across the Rio Grande, pollution of the water—you name it. It's an incredible array of correspondence covering many, many subjects. At that time, of course, the Chamizal question was hovering in the background. It was only five years after the Water Treaty had been negotiated.

Q: Could you explain the Chamizal business?

RUBOTTOM: Chamizal was a dispute that went all the way back to the late 19th century over the riparian boundaries of the Rio Grande River right near or almost in the center of the city of El Paso, Texas which is right across from Ciudad Juarez. The dispute arose as to whether there was a sudden change in the river boundary or whether it was gradual. Under riparian law, international law, if you have a gradual change, the boundary stays with the river. But if you have a sudden change, the boundary stays where it was. Nothing was done to settle this dispute for all these years and then suddenly in the early 1900's it erupted to a boiling point and the United States and the Mexicans called in the Canadians to be the mediators. The Canadians listened to the two sides and decided the Mexicans were in the right, and awarded the boundary to Mexico back where it was. This meant that some of the U.S. occupied land was in Mexican territory. The United States refused to accept the decision, so this boil continued to be a problem. It was not settled until 1963-64 after President Johnson came in. Many people think it wouldn't have been settled then if there hadn't been a native Texan who was willing to knock heads together in El Paso, because the El Pasoites didn't want it settled. But it was settled on a realistic basis. The interesting thing is that it could have been settled ten years before. When I was on the Mexican desk, in 1952-53, Deputy Assistant Secretary Tom Mann, came around to my office one day and said, “Dick, let's talk about something.” We went in and closed the door, pulled out a big map of that area, and we worked on that map for thirty minutes or an hour, showing how certain territory could be exchanged that would satisfy probably both sides. We agreed it was worth trying. So we called in the Minister Counselor, not the Ambassador, the Minister Counselor of the Mexican Embassy, and went over it with him, and he wasn't too offended by it. He thought it might have some merit. But he never did come back with any kind of favorable answer, or any answer, as a matter of fact. The truth of the matter is, that up until that time, the Mexicans found it convenient to have that issue. They could always bring it up, any time they wanted to, to apply a little leverage on us. Finally in 1963-64, I think they found they'd wrung out all the advantages they could, so they decided it was time to settle. They settled the Chamizal then.

Q: I read a book recently about Mexican-American relations in which it was said that traditionally the Mexican Foreign Ministry has always been loaded with people who were not violently, but had an anti-American bias, whereas some of the other Ministries such as Defense and Interior and all, had much better relations with the United States on their own. This was always a problem. Did you see any indication of this?

RUBOTTOM: Yes, to some extent I would agree with that. I think you can't generalize completely on it. I had very, very close friends in the Mexican Government. The friends that I met then when I was on the Mexican desk, in the early 1950's, were still in important positions, or even more important positions a few years later when I became Assistant Secretary and I was dealing with them. In fact, during the time I was on the Mexican desk, I completed two rather important and successful negotiations with Mexico. One was on the settlement of the railroad retirement fund problem which took care of their demand that all the money paid into the railroad retirement fund by the tens of thousands of Mexican railroad workers who came up and worked on our railroads during World War II, were able to at least get some credit for the Mexican government even though the individuals didn't get credit. That was a tough agreement to negotiate. Then I was also able to settle a problem—the 1951 Immigration Agreement. I was the principle negotiator on that. Both of those agreements, along with the trade agreements with Venezuela were cited in 1952 when I received the Superior Service Award. I found negotiation to be the ultimate test of the diplomat. And they were my ultimate test. Some people are successful of course, and some are not. I'm not sure that I know what the answer is. I think some of my colleagues tended to give up too quickly. I think you have to have an extraordinary capacity to state and restate in various ways whatever the rationale is for the position you take when you're trying to negotiate an agreement. Besides the intellectual, the legal, and the political process of determining your position, discussing it with the other side and ultimately coming to whatever compromises you need, to reach agreement in so many words, you're probably not going to be able to do that unless you have some rapport with the person with whom you're negotiating. I can tell you a story if you're interested.

Q: I would.

RUBOTTOM: This demonstrates the point. In January of '52—by that time I'd been in Washington two years and I'd completed these two negotiations with Mexico in the second year, '51—I was called in by the Assistant Secretary, Ed Miller, and told that they were going to pull me off Middle American and Mexican Affairs and ask me to head a U.S. team to negotiate a trade agreement with Venezuela. I said I'd never been near Venezuela. They said you'll have a chance to go near it and we want you to do this job. So, the first thing I had to do of course was to go before the trade agreement committee and learn the lingo, learn the issues from that standpoint, because that had commerce, treasury, as well as all the various economic bureaus, individuals involved, and the State Department. A wonderful man was chairman of it, named Win Brown. I'll never forget, I think he's dead now, Winfield Brown. He had a very distinguished career. And a man whom I knew in ARA, named Ed Cale, was on that committee. Then I had to learn what the issues were on the political side. I went off with a team of five people and we were joined by a man from the Embassy in Caracas, the First Secretary of Embassy. I don't want to prolong the story. My opposite number was the Under Secretary for Economic Affairs in the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry, named Manuel Reyna. Reyna was an attorney. He was not a career diplomat. He had studied for the priesthood in Spain to be a Jesuit priest earlier, but he'd never entered the priesthood. He was married and had two children. I was married and at that time I had two children. In fact, toward the end of the negotiations our third child was born. My wife has always fussed at me because I was gone during a good part of the time when she was awaiting that third child. Well, in a setting of that kind, with the enormous petroleum and the other investments of the United States there was an awful lot of entertaining that went on. Both the delegations were invited out to cocktail parties and receptions and occasionally dinners. We didn't get along too well with the top Government people because this was during the Perez Jimenez regime in Venezuela and it was already taking on some rather ugly aspects as a hard-nosed military dictatorship. But it didn't interfere with these trade agreements negotiations. Well, Reyna and I would

meet, five or six Americans on one side of the table, five or six people across from us on the Venezuelan side, and we'd meet two or three days a week. Then we'd go back to the government and get whatever instruction we'd need, and then we would meet again. We weren't making too much progress although we were holding the line. Later on we found out that our back-up position was already known to the Venezuelans. So that made it a little bit silly for us to be going through this charade of trying to hold the original, but I finally got the permission of the trade agreements committee to go to the back-up position and we got that one eventually accepted. But Reyna and I got tired of cocktail party routines and he and I would get off in the corner and sit down and talk, over maybe one drink and then a couple of coca-colas or something like that. Reyna was extremely interested in me because both of my grandfathers were Baptist preachers. One had come to Texas from Mississippi and the other had come to Texas from Missouri. And I was interested in him because he had studied for the Jesuit priesthood in Spain. Little did know that I was going to go to Spain in about a year. I became personally interested and friendly with Reyna and he with me. I am convinced we speeded up the successful negotiation of that trade agreement. There were only two items they were shipping to us, oil and iron ore. We had about 75 or 100 items and they were mostly food stuffs. We were exporting a tremendous amount of prepared food. In those days Venezuela didn't have much food production of its own and it was the most expensive place in the world to live. Incidentally, we couldn't stay in the best hotel because our per diem didn't permit it. We had to stay in a second-rate hotel. The personal factor, the rapport factor between negotiators, that has to be sound also in addition to whatever your political and intellectual positions are.

Q: Going back to Mexican side where you negotiated this I'm interested in the—looking at the period—how you found the Mexican Foreign Ministry officials that you dealt with. Both their competence and also their attitudes towards the United States.

RUBOTTOM: Well, to begin with, I found that Mexicans were extremely competent. And I found that they knew the United States in general much better than we knew Mexico. In those days one was dealing with quite a number of Mexicans who had lived in the United

States in exile as children. This happened during the most terrible part of the Mexican modern revolution, which began about 1911. There was fighting, crisscrossing north and south and east and west, across the country which lasted up till 1919 and 1920. Certainly until the constitution of 1917. That would have been a period of six to eight or nine years. Many Mexicans who could afford it left Mexico and lived in Brooklyn. I know of two families who lived in Brooklyn. Anywhere to get out of Mexico during those violent years. So these people who were my opposite numbers had gone to American schools and some of them spoke English very well. Not all of them. Fortunately, I had learned my Spanish, my practical Spanish, after the book learning, in Manzanillo. So, later on, when I was in Spain I remember Ambassador Lodge, John Davis Lodge, who was fluent in French would use my help as interpreter. He quickly became fluent in Spanish. But he would introduce me, as Mr. Rubottom, “a Texan who speaks Spanish with a Mexican accent.”

Let me finish up a little bit more on Mexico. I think we were on that subject as I recall. Anyone who knows the history of U.S.-Mexico relations has to understand at the very outset why every Mexican has some feeling of resentment towards the United States of America. They lost almost half of their territory in the so-called U.S.-Mexico War. Then came the “Porfiriato,” the 35-yr. regime of Porfirio Diaz, which lasted until 1910. Americans owned ranches of large acreage which were expropriated. The American oil companies were expropriated in 1938. The United States and Mexico might have had another major incident if it hadn't been for the fact that we were on the verge of World War II. I think that Roosevelt found it in his interest to negotiate a settlement in 1941 of the expropriation or nationalization of oil. But then I'm skipping over the fact that during the Woodrow Wilson period in 1914-15, we landed Marines in Tampico and Veracruz. Here you had one of the most idealistic of our Presidents who nevertheless rationalized completely the sending of Marines right at the height of the Mexican Revolution. So anyway, they feel first and foremost that they've got to make any American understand that they want to be respected, they want to be dealt with as equals. They tend to hold on as long as they can to defend whatever the Mexican position is. I always found that Mexicans after pushing

and feinting in whatever the negotiation was, knew where to stop, knew where to draw the line short of going so far that it would be adverse to their interest. I think they were not really trying to achieve any quote victories in negotiations. I think they were satisfied, as I think we Americans should be with what is a “fair deal.” So that both sides get something out of an agreement, a negotiation that they can feel is beneficial, and supportive of their interest. I don't need to tell you that when an agreement results in quote victory for one side or the other you're simply laying the groundwork for problems to come up later. Because the loser never forgives or forgets.

Q: Two things I learned in early diplomacy. One, there's no such thing as a diplomatic victory because, as you say, the problem doesn't go away. And the other thing is that you don't lie.

RUBOTTOM: Right.

Q: How did you find our Embassy at the time? Again, there have often been complaints that our Embassy in Mexico City has problems that are sometimes of its own making or not, or they're not as finely tuned in or they get too many problems. Did you find that at the time or not or did you feel that we had a strong Embassy in Mexico City?

RUBOTTOM: Well, interestingly enough, just before I took over the Mexican desk, in January, I had been up here in December and they wanted me to get on the job as quickly as possible so they worked out an arrangement with the Embassy for me to go to Mexico City to be briefed by the Ambassador and the head of the political section, as well as some of the other people there because obviously they needed to know me, and I needed to know them. I went, I guess, between Christmas and New Year's and spent all that week. Walter Thurston was then the Ambassador. He was a very highly regarded career ambassador, a bachelor, a man of certainly—how would I describe him—good personality but not the least bit aggressive. On the contrary he was polite, punctiliously polite, proper, but I was to work with him for the next year, at least, and I found him to be

an outstanding representative. Chuck Burrows, Ambassador Charles Burrows, later, was then the head of the political section. Shortly after that he was promoted to Class I. I think that at that time he was the youngest Class I Foreign Service Officer in the Service. So I had a lot of respect for him. I was still Class IV, trying to work out of the low category I found myself in after first coming in the Service. The Embassy at that time didn't have the place they are in now, which they've already outgrown long since. In fact it was the negotiation for the settlement of the Lend-Lease Agreement that I did in 1951 that led to that present structure and the residence that they're now in. What we did was to, in effect, get possession of enough pesos, to do that, because they said they wanted the money paid back from the railroad retirement debt which was somewhere in the neighborhood of 16 million dollars. We said they owed us around 23 million dollars on Lend-Lease for the airplanes they used in the Philippines at the tail end of the war. I think they were P-40 airplanes. We were getting absolutely nowhere in either one of these negotiations and suddenly I had the idea, that the difference was seven million dollars. I said, why don't we take the seven million dollars in pesos and build a new Embassy and a new residence down there and keep on negotiating and if we don't ever reach a settlement then we'll just consider those two items canceled out. The United States will have this and Mexico will have the benefit of our having a proper place to work and live. And that was the way it was settled.

Q: Well, I take it you thought we had a strong Embassy at that time.

RUBOTTOM: Yes, we did.

Q: Well, shall we move on to your next assignment do you think? Or is there anything else we might cover? You had Middle American Affairs which I guess included Central America too? Were there any major problems at this time? This is during a period of the Truman Administration. The Truman Administration was ending and the Eisenhower Administration was coming in at the time.

RUBOTTOM: That's right.

Q: Was that, in ARA terms, a hostile take over did you find? Or did that particular transition in ARA work smoothly?

RUBOTTOM: At my level, and I was an office Director by that time, I didn't feel it. I'm sure of course, that Eddie Miller felt it. He was then the Assistant Secretary and those under him didn't know what their future would be. Miller was replaced by Jack Cabot. Cabot stayed only a relatively short time and then he was replaced eventually by Henry Holland. I do remember though in “New” State, as it was called, was only on Virginia Avenue and all the rest of that building had not been built. I remember very well that cold January day when we went out on the back parking lot and there two, three, or four hundred people assembled and listened to John Foster Dulles take over. Were you there then?

Q: No, but I've heard the scene described again and again. What struck in your mind particularly that he said?

RUBOTTOM: Nothing of major significance to me. I don't remember. I got to know him very well later.

Q: Because many of the people quote again and again that as far as the Foreign Service was concerned the fact that he called for positive loyalty at that speech out in the back thing, sent not only cold shivers, but emotional shivers up and down the spine because they didn't know what this meant. It sound like thought control or what have you. The McCarthy period was just cranking up.

RUBOTTOM: Those were very difficult days. No, the McCarthy period was already in.

Q: Oh yes, that's right. It was.

RUBOTTOM: In fact, I was on the Security Committee of the State Department in that first tour of duty. I was one of ten officers, or fifteen who I had to spend hours every week reading over files. I participated in two or three hearings. Most cases never got to the hearing stage. All this started before Dulles came in. At that time, frankly, Dulles did not say anything that alienated me or frightened me. I guess it's a matter of personality, a matter of temperament, a matter of judgment. I made the transition from Acheson-Truman to Dulles-Eisenhower and then to Rusk-Kennedy. Then Johnson came in and I took early retirement in 1964. Dean Rusk became a very loyal supporter of mine and I've gotten to know him far better since he was Secretary than I knew him then. I was Ambassador in Argentina for a relatively short time and then I was at the Naval War College. So I decided on early retirement. I was offered two Deanships. One was here at George Washington. Then the Vice presidency at SMU was offered. And I decided to take it. I said to myself, I have time now—I was 52 years old—to pursue another career and rear one of my three children in the United States. I took early retirement. I've had another full career since.

Q: I would like to talk a little more about the McCarthy hearings, the security hearings. We were trying to deal with the problem on our own, rather than have outside influence coming in. How did you find these accusations? Was there a major, minor, what sort of problem was it? From your observation?

RUBOTTOM: I think I was aware that we had a lot of misguided idealists, and a lot of people whose loyalty came into question. But I never did feel we had very many, if any, in the State Department. I first became aware of the role of journalism and movies in influencing the thinking of the American public when I was a younger man, before I got into the Foreign Service, during the Spanish Civil War. Then later on I lived in Spain and I've heard both sides of it over there. I have never seen such lop-sided journalism as there was in Time magazine and some other publications at that time. Because there was no question in my mind but what the Spanish Republic was Red, Communist, Soviet-supported Red. As brutal, mean, repressive as the Franco Dictatorship was. Nevertheless,

I'm sure we would have had a Communist government in Spain, if the Republican forces had won. Now this happened to me when I was in my 20's, I mean these impressions. I didn't know anything about Spain, except what I read. But I had a Masters Degree in International Relations. I read good literature whenever I could. And I had the feeling that I was being brainwashed and that the American public was being brainwashed. So I came in with that presumption—came into my Foreign Service career. These files were pages and pages and pages thick. They were based on answers to questions in most cases, and they were based on rumors in other cases. And I'd say that 99 cases out of 100 never came to a hearing. Whatever the rumor was, whatever the allegation was, was disproved and the person was cleared. I can realize for those who had lived in Washington and had been involved in political things, and whose curiosity had taken them into a library that later turned out was run by a Soviet or communist related, group that they had problems.

Q: These are the famous 57 or 78 or whatever it is list that McCarthy waved around with Communists in the State Department. Well I would like to talk more about that but I think we had better move on. You went to Madrid in 1953 and you were there until 1956 I have.

RUBOTTOM: Yes.

Q: You were what, the Economic Counselor? Then you had several jobs.

RUBOTTOM: Yes, very interesting. Sometime in the mid-Spring of 1953 I received a phone call from Homer Byington who was Director of WE, Western European Affairs. And at that time I was Director of Middle American Affairs. I didn't know Byington very well, hardly at all. And of course WE was sort of the elite political bureau anyway, regional bureau. After a couple of exchanges, he said, Dick how would you like to go to Madrid? Well I nearly fell out of my chair. I said, I'd love to go to Madrid. I said, here I've been studying Spanish and Latin American culture all my life, literally speaking, and I would like to go to the Madre Patria, Mother Country. He said, well, we've got a post open as Commercial Attach# and I'd be happy to recommend you for that. I said, I've never been

a Commercial Attach#. I've been more of a political officer. He said, Well, you negotiated the Venezuelan-U.S. Trade agreements and you've negotiated with Mexico. I think you could handle the Commercial Attach# job if you want it. I said, Okay, I'll take it. So about a month or six weeks later, I had a phone call from Bob Woodward, who was then Director of Foreign Service Personnel, and a good friend of mine. He called me over to his office and closed the door and he said, “I just found out that you committed yourself to Byington to go to Spain as Commercial Attach#.” I said, “That's right.” He said, “Well, I've been holding two Deputy Chief of Mission jobs open for you at small missions in Latin America.” He said, “They're still open if you want to go.” Do you think you can get out of this? I said, Unless you tell me I have to, I would rather go to Spain. He shook his head. I said, “Bob, I've been here over three years, and everybody knew that I was in my last period of duty here, and I'm sorry if this is a problem.” He said, “It's not a problem, I'm concerned about an opportunity for you.” So, I went to Spain. And got there in July of 53. I never will forget I wrote the whole third quarter economic report myself sitting at the typewriter, with the help of two or three Spanish locals. It was a really tough job. I don't know what kind of grade it got but in the meantime they were opening up the Bases agreement that had just been signed. We set up a U.S. Operations mission there.

Q: This is the beginning of the bases in Spain.

RUBOTTOM: I got there in July and the base agreements were signed in September 1953. The Operations Mission was set up and a man named Ed Williams was brought over as a political appointee to be Director of the U.S. Operations Mission. It was a combined mission right from the beginning. They decided they didn't want to have a separate mission of AID people—nowadays it's called AID, but in those days it was called something else—and a separate Embassy economic section. They merged the two. So I found myself working under Williams and I got to know him quite well. In the summer of 1954 I was called in by Ambassador Dunn whom I had gotten to know quite well, and he said, I've been talking to Williams and we're going to move you up to Economic Counselor. The Economic Counselor is going to be transferred and you're going to become the

Deputy Director of the Mission. And I said well that's wonderful news. Thank you very much. So in the fall of 1954 Harold Stassen, who was then Director of FOA, what we call AID today, came over and stayed for three or four days. Williams was taking a firm position that the second increment of economic assistance that went to the Spanish Government because of the base agreements should all be in the form of a grant. Stassen had already instructed Williams to try to negotiate about 80% of it as a loan. Williams was determined not to do this. He had been a successful insurance attorney. He had all kinds of arguments as to why it wasn't fair to Spain to do it this way. “They were entitled to an all-grant second year assistance program just as they had gotten in the first year.” Well, I went with Williams and Stassen to all the negotiations that were going on. I did half of the interpreting. I guess I did the interpreting from Spanish to English, and the Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs did the interpreting from English to Spanish. It was a very busy three days. Stassen left. He had with him the Director of the European Assistance Program, a fellow named Charles Urschel, who happened to be from Texas. I'd never known him before, never heard of him before. Two days after they left Spain I had a phone call from Paris telling me they were going to get rid of Williams and they were going to promote me to be Director of the Operations Mission. I said this is going to be a terrible blow to Williams. He's a very close friend of mine and I said I appreciate the confidence that you're showing in me, but I said I feel very badly about Williams. Well, he Said, He's just refused to follow our instructions and we feel that you could do the job. So, sure enough the telegram came in and Williams was out, and I was promoted to be Director of USOM, one of three members of the country team, which meant that in the space of three or four months I had moved from Commercial Attach# to Economic Counselor to Deputy Director to Director of the Economic Mission. I stayed in that job for about a year and a half until May of 1956 when I came back to be Assistant Secretary. It was an incredible set of developments.

Q: Could you describe how we saw Spain and Franco at this period of time? This was not that long-ten years after the war—Here was the one fascist dictatorship still at least I'm not sure that is the right term.

RUBOTTOM: I wish I had brought my book with me. I am co-author of a book entitled United States and Spain since World War II that was published in 1984.

Q: Who published it? This will go in the record.

RUBOTTOM: It was published by Praeger, later bought by Houghton Mifflin. In that, I go into a great deal of detail, of course. I wrote all the political part of it and my colleague at SMU, Carter Murphy, wrote the economic part of it, and there are alternating chapters. It was an extremely pragmatic arrangement that led Acheson and Truman to finally overcome their revulsion against Franco. The pragmatic consideration was frankly, security. I think that in the light of what was happening in the rest of Europe, the problem of dealing with France was borne out later by their pulling out of NATO, that we needed a security anchor in southwestern Europe. We were also having problems with Morocco where we also had bases. And we had problems with Libya. This became a paramount consideration overcoming the political stigma. And there's no question that a political stigma was attached to that agreement in 1952. It was made at the time that Admiral Sherman was sent over and he died a week after he left. But the negotiations had started then during the Acheson-Truman period and then they were completed in the Dulles-Eisenhower period in 1953. I always felt it was a fair deal on both sides because security was a top consideration. Spain at that time was absolutely destitute, the result of its own three years of terrible civil war, deprivation and isolation in World War II. You wouldn't believe some of the scenes in Spain then. For example, shortly after I arrived, my wife and I were invited by Ambassador Dunn to go to the annual celebration in southwestern Spain at a place called Los Palos, where Columbus took off on his discovery voyage. It was an extraordinary experience, all these Christopher Colombus scholars were there, some political people as well. As we were driving down the highway—I had only been

in Spain a couple of months at that time—I saw a dark spot on the highway ahead and I wondered what in the world it was. Finally when we got close we had to slow down. It turned out to be a group of fifteen to twenty women dressed in black dresses with black bonnets covering their heads. Their arms were all covered too, and they were using old fashioned picks, trying to break big rocks into small rocks to repair the highway. They literally did not have any kind of highway equipment. So the U.S. assistance program was an enormous injection of modernization in to a destitute economy and society. The Program included the highways, the railroads, down to and including the ties and the steel for the tracks, electric power equipment, the steel mills, agriculture, technical assistance for some of their cottage industries, and so on right up to the atomic nuclear field. The last two years I was there I traveled all over Spain and saw what was being done. There's not the slightest question in my mind, and the point is made in this book we ultimately wrote, that Spain probably could not have made the economic transition, and it might not have been able to make the political transition from the harsh dictatorship of Franco to a Socialist Democracy, which occurred within less than two years after his death, had it not been for the injection of U.S. economic assistance. We poured one billion one hundred million dollars into Spain in about eight years. Most of it was in loans, but the first little bit was in grants. The Spanish people are hard-working, resourceful, technically competent people. But they had no resources at that time. As I said, the country was destitute.

Q: How did we deal at the Embassy with the Spanish Officials? After all we were dealing with a dictatorship very much like the type we had been fighting in the Wars so it must have seemed like having very strange bedfellows. How did we deal with these people on the personal and professional level?

RUBOTTOM: I dealt with them just like the Mexicans or anybody else. I was in Franco's Office one time in the three years I was in Spain. That was the time John Davis Lodge presented his credentials after he replaced Ambassador James Dunn. The people in the Foreign Office and the Economic Ministry, because they had established a special section, (later the man who headed that section became the Spanish Ambassador to the United

States) to deal with the U.S. Operation Mission on the economic part of our relationship. They were competent people. They were sensitive people. They at times could be difficult but we always managed to come to agreement in the time that I was there.

Q: Did we have any, I'm not sure the term is right, hidden agenda? In other words, we were giving aid for bases, but did we look upon aid, trying to direct it or doing something that we felt would eventually turn Spain around and make it something more palatable?

RUBOTTOM: You've touched on an extremely important and a sensitive subject and something which takes us off into the realm of conjecture to some extent. I think you'd get a different answer from almost any person you talked to. No American can be reared in school, family, church, etc. without having a commitment to the democratic process, without being offended by a cruel dictatorship when he or she sees it. I've always felt that you, in addition to the words you use in diplomatic negotiations, also have certain facial language, you have certain personality, you have certain things you say and do. There is the way you treat subordinates including chauffeurs and janitors that shows what your attitude is. It's not just what we say, it's what we do. It's the example you set in your personal life. And if you're in a country three years and if you occupy a position of any importance they're going to know about you. You stand out. I think these are the things that really count. You rarely ever get into a position where you can lecture an official about the advantage of democracy over dictatorship. Although you may at times have to carry out some fairly tough worded instructions. You then ought to send back what you say. I never will forget dealing with one Ambassador in Central America when later I was Assistant Secretary. Every telegram that would come back in response to instruction, he'd tell us what the Foreign Minister or President said. I finally had to send him a telegram and say, What did you say that led the Foreign Minister and the President to say that? Because its a dialogue—it's not a one sided conversation. So it's a combination of all these things. An American, when he goes abroad in a diplomatic status, if he doesn't reflect the democratic traditions of his country and the values of his country, then he ought not to be there. And frankly, I'm afraid that there have been a few who have not

done that very well. I think you make a whole lot more progress that way, than you do by trying to lecture. I never will forget that Fletcher Warren, a colleague and contemporary of Beaulac's, still living at 92 in Greenville, Texas, came home one time from Nicaragua. It was his first Ambassadorial post and he came home under instructions. We were intending to send a message to President Somoza that the U.S. disapproved of his removing from office the man who'd been elected President of Nicaragua. We sent him back after six months. This was when I was involved in Middle American Affairs. We found out that Tacho Somoza, not Tachito, (this was in the early 1950's), was far more repressive, far less respectful of the rights of his opponents, when we had withdrawn our Ambassador, than he was when the Ambassador was present. Now this is hard to sell to the press sometimes. I'm not saying that there aren't times when we shouldn't bring people home. Obviously we should.

Q: It has always struck me that there is something a little bit crazy about diplomatic practice. When relations get poor you will remove the top man and sometimes keep moving on down to supposedly the least powerful person. It is considered an indication of diplomatic displeasure. But to take your senior person and remove him from the scene just when the going gets tough strikes me as being a bit idiotic. Is there anything else we should cover in Spain before we move on?

RUBOTTOM: We've been at this for almost two hours and we haven't even gotten to what might be the most crucial points, and I don't know if I'm going to have time.

Q: All right, you call it quits. Let's move on whenever you're ready.

RUBOTTOM: I think we ought to quit as far as Spain is concerned. I came home from Spain to be Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs. I got a phone call in March or April of 1956 and I came home in May. I became Deputy Assistant Secretary under Henry Holland. At the time I didn't realize that Holland had plans to resign. He resigned in September, and I found myself Acting Assistant Secretary until the following June of 1957.

If I had known I would be left Acting that long I think I would have asked for an assignment to the field. Finally, in April, Dulles, one day when we were going to visit the President of Costa Rica who was staying at the Blair House, said, “Dick I'm going to recommend that you become Assistant Secretary.” I said, “Well, Mr. Secretary, I'm very honored that you would think that. I've been Acting Assistant Secretary now for about six months. There are at least two or three other people who are very well known politically who would like to have the job.” He interrupted me and said “Dick, are you telling me that you don't want the job?” I said, “No, Sir.” He said, “I've just told you that I'm going to recommend today to the President that you be appointed Assistant Secretary.” I said, “I'd Be very honored. Thank you very much.” So then I had to wait another 90 days for confirmation because Wayne Morse, who was Chairman of the Foreign Relations Subcommittee for Latin America, thought that because I was from Texas that I probably was involved in the oil business, or that I might be involved in something that was not to his liking. He was the great conscience of the Senate. Finally my hearing came up in June and there are 92 pages of fine print testimony of questions and answers between Wayne Morse and myself before he finally reached over the stand and shook hands, and said, “Mr. Rubottom, I'm delighted to see that you do not have any connections with the oil business that might adversely affect your dealings with Mexico. As far as I'm concerned, I'm going to recommend and vote for your confirmation.” So it took me that long to become Assistant Secretary, but it was a fascinating period and there were lots of things that happened during that time. You could spend all the time of course, talking about Castro, but I don't want to.

Q: Well, all right, Let's don't talk about Castro. Lets talk about some of the other problems that you...

RUBOTTOM: Well, I lectured to a law class this last week in Dallas, a graduate law class, on the constitutional foundation of foreign policy, and I was remembering some of the things that happened in those days. This goes back to the chartering of the OAS in 1948. Here you have at that time a man who was a very junior officer, now in charge of U.S. Latin American Affairs in the Department of State. There was a lot of commitment, a lot

of belief, that the charter of the OAS meant something. The RIO Treaty was incorporated in the Charter. Mutual security, non intervention, not in the absolute, but obviously if you had a security interest that was threatened and that required that you, you could. This was pretty well spelled out. There was one time when the OAS worked to a charm. Many people have forgotten about this. There was a long standing border dispute that broke out in 1957 into an outright shooting war between El Salvador and Nicaragua. In those days the map of Central America had a little pie shaped area that was painted gray, and it was always called “territory in dispute.” It's no longer that way because it was settled eventually. I remember getting a phone call from the Ambassador, Whiting Willauer, in Tegucigalpa, telling me that shooting and fighting had broken out between the two countries. So we called a special meeting of the OAS Council and they acted for the Foreign Ministers under the terms of the Rio Treaty and the OAS Charter and within 24, maybe 36 hours, there was a special committee representing the foreign ministers who were in turn represented by the OAS Council, that flew down there. We provided the plane. Ambassador Dryer was one of the members. He was our representative on the OAS Council at the time. Within about 48 hours they had a cease-fire. Eventually after long negotiations the combatants withdrew and the border dispute was submitted to the World Court. In a year or two the World Court came back with a decision favoring Honduras. No one thought the Nicaraguans would accept it but they did. By that time old Papa Somoza was dead and I think his son, Luis, was President. Unfortunately, Luis later died of a heart attack, and was replaced by Tachito who didn't have quite the experience and the gumption and the commitment to provide his people with a good government. I don't think he was as honest either as his older brother would have been. Those were the kinds of things the OAS in its halcyon days in the 50's was able to accomplish. I think it has been very unfortunate that it has fallen on hard times. I happen to have been all through these years a supporter of American policy in El Salvador and supporter of American policy towards the contras in Nicaragua. I want to tell you why. In my dealings with Cuba while I was Assistant Secretary, and I don't want to go into too much detail, I was the No. 2 man at the Foreign Ministers meeting in Santiago in 1959

under Secretary Herter. Where the Cuban threat was a problem. And then I was the #2 man in the delegation at the two Foreign Ministers meeting in 1960. The first one dealt with the Dominican Republic and the second one dealt with Castro. I saw the United States try to make the point under all the terms of the OAS Charter that its security was genuinely threatened by what was going on in Cuba. By that time one of the leading Soviet ministers had entered into military agreements with Castro.

Q: Was it Mikoyan? I think he was one of the first to go over there.

RUBOTTOM: Yes, I believe it was Mikoyan. But we could never get the Latin Americans to admit that we had a security threat. It was a one-way ticket for them. “If our security is threatened, we'd like you to help us but your security is not threatened so we are not going to vote to do the things that you would like us to do,” and this always bothered me. It also underlines the fact that there is a two pronged or double edged approach to Latin American dictatorships. I find this is true in the United States as well. If the people who have been concerned about the military and the government regime of El Salvador were equally concerned about the threat from the leftist side, I wouldn't be so concerned about them. There's a tendency always to be fearful of the rightist dictatorships but to be understanding, if not outright sympathetic, to the leftist dictatorships, and this has always bothered me.

Q: I have the same problem. I'm not a Latin American specialist, so I'm showing my ignorance, Peurifoy was before your...

RUBOTTOM: Actually you're talking about the intervention through the CIA of the Castillo Armas invasion or entry into Guatemala to overthrow the Arbenz regime in 1954.

Q: Now was that before your time?

RUBOTTOM: No, I was not Assistant Secretary and I was already in Spain and that was not on the books when I left to go to Spain. That happened later. I will say this though.

Arevalo, who was the President before Arbenz, always called himself the “Spiritualist Socialist” and he opened the door for Arbenz to come in. If you go back and read some of the material released at the time there's absolutely no question but that Arbenz turned his country into a Communist regime, whether or not he was a Communist. I have the same sort of pragmatic approach to Castro. It didn't make any difference whether Castro was a Communist or not. He was so obsessed in his hatred for the United States and his policies toward the United States were so negative and adverse to our interests that we had to take some steps to try to deal with him.

Q: You mentioned that you have been interviewed before, and I assume there was considerable concentration on the Castro business. Where would a person go to see what you have to say on that? I ask because of the time constraints now.

RUBOTTOM: I guess the one at Columbia University.

Q: The Colombia collection. I'm concerned about keeping you too long. Can we cover Argentina? How did you get the job and what was the situation?

RUBOTTOM: Remember now, I was a career officer. By the summer of 1960 I'd been Assistant Secretary for four years, longer than anybody else.

Q: Yes, particularly ARA, I notice from having interviewed some people, that it was like a revolving door. It sounded as if you were the only person really to hold it for a decade.

RUBOTTOM: That's right. Loy Henderson called me up one day and said, “Dick”—He was Deputy Under Secretary for Management, and I was Assistant Secretary—”We're thinking about replacing Beaulac and sending him to the War College and we'd like to recommend you for the Embassy in Buenos Aires.” I said, “That would be wonderful, Thank you very much.” It was just that simple. I had worked out a very good arrangement with Dante Fascell over in the House Committee, who was the leading Latin Americanist, and with Wayne Morse, who was the leading Latin Americanist on the Foreign Relations

Committee. So my confirmation was actually carried out while I was out of the country at the Foreign Ministers meeting at San Jose and I was sworn in as Ambassador in San Jose at that Embassy. I had gotten to know Argentina fairly well. I had traveled there several times after the overthrow of Peron in 1955. A lot of my attention as Assistant Secretary was devoted to Argentina coming out of that Peron period. In 1958 I had attended the inauguration of Frondizi as President, along with Vice President Nixon. I didn't know Frondizi well, but I had met him. I was happy to go there but I found the Argentines to be difficult to work with. Individually they are among the most charming people in the world but as a country they're difficult. I think that way back in their golden era from about 1880-1930, they saw themselves as rivals to the United States in the southern hemisphere. By this time they had come upon very hard times. Frankly, I didn't find it easy to forgive that they had been pro-Axis during World War II. I spent five years in the Navy, and during one of those years I was down there very close by and I knew some of the things that had been going on. Frondizi was a great hope for Argentina. He was second generation Italian, and about 40% of the population is Italian and 40% is Spanish in Argentina. He always had a problem though, and that was “Gris Eminente,” his Grey Eminence, a man named Frigerio. Frigerio was not admired by most Argentines, particularly not trusted by the military because it was always thought that he had gone to Venezuela where Peron was living at the time of the election prior to May of 1958 and made a deal to deliver the Peronist vote to Frondizi. This undermined Frondizi's position in the minds of many of the knowledgeable people and it made Frigerio, who was seen as the instrument of this deal, even more suspect. So, I did not have any dealings with Frigerio and this hurt my relations with Frondizi. I think he expected the American Ambassador to deal with him as sort of an alter ego. I didn't do it.

Q: Was this a deliberate policy on your part, not to show because you thought you felt by doing this it would bring you to close an attachment to Peronist taint?

RUBOTTOM: Yes, that was the principal reason. I knew he was not respected. I came home after about a year and a half. Then I went to the War College, following which I took

early retirement. I want to tell you a little about Argentina. I think Argentina is one of the most challenging countries in the hemisphere. And as you read about it now, probably one of the most tragic countries in the hemisphere. There's a piece in yesterday's or today's New York Times saying the Argentines are beginning to wonder if their destiny is no longer as bright as it used to be. In spite of its human resources—the most literate country in the hemisphere—in spite of its material resources, it simply has not been able to govern itself. Right now, the inflation is so far out of bounds there's no telling if they will be able to bring order to the country. It's a very sad case. Many of these qualities came to view when I was there. Argentina at the turn of the century and on up into the thirties—they had a famous peace conference there in 1936, I've forgotten the exact name for it—but they had some very distinguished statesmen there. You don't read about them much anymore. One of the families that I came to know very well and whom I respected was the Paz family. They were the owners and editors of La Prensa. I wish I could say that the Argentines had lived up to their opportunity but they haven't.

Q: And you felt it at the time?

RUBOTTOM: Yes.

Q: Well, Mr. Ambassador, I've kept you much longer than I wanted, but just for the researcher, you've given interviews to the Dulles Library of the Dulles collection at Princeton.

RUBOTTOM: Which is the one at Columbia?

Q: That's a sort of general one.

RUBOTTOM: I'm not sure I'm at Princeton, but I know I'm at Columbia and at Abilene, Kansas.

Library of Congress

Q: At Abilene, Kansas at the Eisenhower Library. I like to refer people to those to fill in. I'm afraid we could have gone on for hours.

RUBOTTOM: Well, I'm getting ready to write my own memoirs, so maybe I can say a few things in that book.

End of interview